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1871

Burnand & Hermann
IRISH POPLINS.—INGLIS & TINCKLER.

ABOUT THE BATTLE

OF

DORKING;

OR

My Grandmother.

BY

F. C. BURNAND & ARTHUR SKETCHLEY,

With New and Original Music by

THEODORE HERMANN.

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1871 DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Sergeant Blower (retired) ... Mr. F. DEWAR
Cheeks, the Mariner (cashiered) Mr. F. H. IRISH

First produced at the ROYAL ALHAMBRA THEATRE, on
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too, is unquestionably

WITHOUT A PRECEDENT, IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S AMUSEMENTS.

All the more remarkable when it is borne in mind how the title has been hacknied and abused by the (almost) innumerable troupes that have been taken through the Provinces, often with such weak and servile imitations, as to thoroughly disgust the Public with the very name of Christy Minstrels.

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SCENE.

Apartment in the Cottage of CHEEKS' Grandmother at Dorking. Through the windows R. and L. of C. is seen a cabbage garden in which are small cannon, a flagstaff, cannon balls. Distant marine view, white cliffs, sea, &c. Table R. chair R.C. Bed curtains concealing a recess L. in which is a bed, Fireplace R. over it a telescope, model of a ship, cutlass, pistols, musket. One side of the room is decorated with all Cheeks' Grandmother's property. Opening Music.

BLOWER discovered sitting before the table, on which propped up by desk, blacking bottle and rushlight shade is a large portrait of CHEEKS. BLOWER is engaged in altering the picture which is now a half carrotty man in sailor's dress, and the other half black in military uniform. He has paint pots about him and brushes; on a chair are CHEEKS' trousers almost split into two separate legs. BLOWER is sitting in his shirt sleeves with waistcoat split up the back, he wears his military trousers with one stripe off one leg: he wears a stock showing no collar.

BLOWER (*stepping back and regarding the portrait with admiration*). There! I think I'm getting it something like at last (*in one hand he holds a hand-looking-glass*). It's very difficult to sit to yourself for your own portrait, one side of the face is a striking likeness; but in the other I can't get rid of that infernal Cheeks (*tries again, makes a smudge*). No, I can't, my eye is tired, the constant contemplation of the Beautiful has dazed me, I will seek relief at the needle's point. Where is the needle? Where is the needle? (*sits on his work*). Ah! (*jumps up quickly*.) There is the needle! (*takes up one leg of trouser, and regards the other lying on back of chair*.) These were his habits as he lived—and must be mine. Poor Cheeks! he was not a great man! (*pointing to broom in pail*) That's his figure to the life. The waistcoat I have adopted for a divided duty, his marine coat is not insurmountable, but these—the bags have baffled one. This piece (*takes up piece of canvass*) must be let in. Blower to your task! (*starts*.) Blower! Why do I murmur that name? I was Blower! hush! I am not Blower. I have dissembled—I am Cheeks the Marine!

that is I say I am, and all the world believes me. I have not told anybody yet, in order not to arouse suspicion, and I must get accustomed to my name. If anybody suddenly called me Cheeks, I should be astonished. Why indulge in this bad habit of talking to myself? Because I have no one else to talk to. I dare not tell anybody, that, after the great battle of Dorking, fought within a few yards of this very spot, I retired from the scene of my triumphs to pass some considerable time in solitude, forced upon me by my ungrateful country. At last I was free, and was determined to seek my old companion in arms, the indomitable Cheeks. Imagine my feelings when, on reaching the sea-port of Dorking, I found the marine residence of Cheeks' grandmother empty. The hospitable door no longer opened to me, the key partially concealed beneath the thatch. Being an old soldier, I was at no loss how to lay siege, plan the traverses, and escalate the fortress. I did so. I simply drew the key from the thatch, unlocked the door, and here I am, resolved to hold my own against all comers. I said to myself, "No one here—then they must be defunct!" Why? Thus: "If Cheeks were alive, Cheeks would be here. Cheeks is *not* here, ergo, Cheeks is dead." So much for Cheeks. Now for his grandmother. His grandmother was always bed-ridden; she can't move without her bed. Well, her bed is here, she's not *in* bed, and she can't be out of bed, unless they've buried her. They wouldn't bury her unless she were dead; ergo, she's dead. So much for Cheeks' grandmother—so much the pair. As Cheeks must inherit Cheeks' grandmother's money; to save trouble, I have taken upon myself to be Cheeks. Henceforth, let friends at a distance take notice that I am Cheeks. I fought as Blower: I retire as Cheeks. Fatigued with war, deaf to the trumpet call, I repose on my well-earned laurels—or, under the present circumstances, on Cheeks' well-earned laurels.

SONG.

The soldier tired of Wars alarms,
Disguisted with all feats of arms,
Quick *from* the battle-field will fly

When loud he hears the war like cry
To Arms!
When duty calls—he'll not obey,
But swiftly run the other way,
Hooray!

He runs
And shuns
The deadly fray,
He cares not who may gain the day.
Away!

(*gaily*) On my charger bold I'll neigh and prance,
As through the ranks I proudly dance.

With my gay sabretashe,
My galop and dash ;
Let the cymbal tying
The clarion ring,

And both together go bon, tying, crash !
(*majestic*) My steed I will curb
As he tramples the herb,
And the daffy downdillies below ;
I'll scour the plain
And never again

In the warlike ranks will I show !

(*plaintive*) Let others slay our foreign foes,
On others laurels I'll repose,
While boasting soldiers' vict'ries gain,
At home the Hero will remain,
Like all who fight—who fight and run away,
He'll live—but will not fight another day.

(gaily) With my gay sabretashe,
My jingle and dash,
Let cymbals tyeing,
Let clarion ring,
And both together go bom, tying, crash!!!

To stop impertinent inquiries, I determined to alter Cheeks' portrait and Cheek's clothes. I have nearly succeeded in making the canvas there (*pointing to portrait*) a fac-simile of my own face, and altering the canvas here (*indicating the piece for trousers*) to my own—(*pauses*)—figure. Though my end is almost achieved, yet I am not happy. The voice of conscience will not be stilled. There are chords—

[*Flageolet heard without.*
Ah! how lovely are those strains! How soothing!

[*Music repeated.*

They seem to bring back to my weary eyelids that sleep to which they have been so long a stranger. (*Yawns.*) Conscience, be still! Could I but still the gnawings of—(*considering*)—is it conscience or hunger? In either case, when in doubt (*yawns*), go to sleep.

[*Disappears through curtains into bed. Flageolet is heard again.*

Enter at back, cautiously, CHEEKS, with flageolet. He is in a tattered sailors' dress, black patch over his eye, and a wooden leg.

CHEEKS *sings and plays.*

Pitee a poor marine—ah!
Who's served his country—his countree—
Oh! many a gallant fight he's seen—ah!
And now he's come back from sea.

CHEEKS (*playing last note*). No reply to my signal! The warming pan hangs mutely on the wall. She sleeps! My gradmother sleeps!

[*A snore.*

I hear her gentle breathing. She has the family snore. Now to my task! Why am I here? Let me see: why *am* I here? After the Great Naval Victory of Dorking, from which time this has always ranked as a first-class seaport, I retired from the scene of my triumphs, to pass some considerable time in solitude forced upon me by an ungrateful country. In order to avoid the honours which would have been thrust upon me, at the moment I saw victory inevitable—but doubtful on which side—I withdrew from the contest. The enemy numbered just twelve thousand—I counted them—I knew our force to be twelve thousand and one—I was the one. Feeling this numerical superiority to be unfair, with the sentiments which ever adorn the true British Marine I scorned to remain any longer and overbalance the enemy. How was this truly heroic act of mine rewarded? I was recalled—that is, brought back by a corporal's guard—and received corporal's punishment—kept in the black-hole, and finally dismissed the service with musical honours. Ungrateful England! thus to requite your heroes! But ah! amid

the surrounding gloom I knew that there was one being alone that lived in a cottage near the wood, to choothe and scar me—I mean to soothe and cheer me—one bright being who never doubted my truth or suspected my courage. I knew that I could fly to her fond embrace as a haven from the storms of a cold ungrateful world. Methinks I see her now, as—

Beside the cottage door
She knelt upon the floor,
And raised me to the shore,
Nor hoped to see me more.....

My Grandmother.

Yes, when I boarded the enemy I thought of her who had boarded and lodged me in her own cottage—here—and I fought for England, home, and my grandmother!

SONG.

'Twas on board the Bold *Bellerophon*,
Brave boys!
That tight trim Man-of-War,
That we fears no seas
Not the battle nor the breeze,
As we sailed away from England's shore,
My boys! my boys!
As we sailed away from England's shore!
Gaff boom the rudder, keel haul the jib!
While the stormy winds do blow,
By night and by day
We will cry belay!
And, pull away my boys. Yeo ho!
Yeo ho!
Aye, pull away my boys, Yea ho!
It was about three bells,
Brave boys!
When we sighted the enemy's fleet
We were all asleep
In the cradle of the deep,
Every tar 'neath his blanket and his sheet.
My boys!
(solenmly) The skipper bounded on the deck,
The anchor in his hand,
And from below I cried "Bravo!"
They were a noble band!

(*con spirits*) Each British tar was a Warriar

On the Bold *Bellerophon*,

I'll a cold in my head

But from my bed

I faintly cheered them on.

Though the cannon may roar,

Though the wind may blow,

Yet the true British tar

No fear can know

As he cried "My dear eyes!"

Here's the *enemee*!

With a crack!

Smack!

Whack!

He falls into the sea,

Down, down, down! goes the *enemee*.

And up, up, up

Goes the flag of victorie!

[*Rule Britannia in Orchestra*

Hurrah! 'twas done!

The victory won!

That night I swam ashore,

They'll never catch me

Again at sea

On board of a Man-of-War.

Gaff boom the rudder!

Keel haul the jib!

Then I sing to the girl I adore!

Yeo ho! Yeo ho!

I never more will go

Aboard of a British Man-of-War!

Dear old girl! This is her cottage. My telescope! my shako! my portrait! Ah! this is touching! I mean this is touching up. She's been attempting to paint me from recollection. She must have had a very dim recollection of me. Perhaps she was getting it ready for the Academy. But what's this? (*seeing trousers*). My regulation trousers! She's been altering them from recollection. But what could have been her motive for cutting them up? Oh, no doubt to find her will, which she made in my favour, and consigned to my care; in the hurry of my departure I left them behind me, with the will concealed in the waistband. I will inspect it while she's

asleep! She's been playing the deuce with the trousers. I hope she's not altered the will. Where's a knife? But stay, am I observed! (*Looks about.*) No! The watchdogs of the law are on my track, and the one man alone who would penetrate this disguise is my old companion Blower, now, as I hear, a detective. [*Snore.*]

She's restless. [*Music.*]
I will soothe her with the air she loves so well. (*Plays flageolet.*) She sleeps.

[*A pillow is thrown violently at him.*]

She doesn't! Still the same light-hearted creature! I knew she'd like it. (*Plays again.*)

[*Another pillow is thrown.*]

Oh! I say, I can't stand this. I must defend myself, even against my grandmother. Draw!

[*Takes up the pillow. BLOWER comes out of bed with a pillow, both hiding their faces from one another with pillows. Sharp encounter. Pause. Music during struggle.*]

CHEEKS (*starting—aside*). Sergeant Blower!

[*Chord.*]

BLOWER (*starting—aside*). Cheeks, the Marine!

[*Chord.*]

CHEEKS (*aside*). He thinks to deceive me by this flimsy device!

BLOWER (*aside*). He thinks to elude me by this transparent disguise!

CHEEKS. Where is my grandmother?

BLOWER. *Your* grandmother! You mean *my* grandmother.

CHEEKS. No; I don't mean *your* grandmother.

BLOWER. If you're referring to the late Mrs. Nosey, know, sir, that I, Lieutenant Cheeks, the Marine, am her grandson and sole representative.

CHEEKS. You! Cheeks! (*Aside.*) Then who am I? Is there some mystery about my birth of which I have been kept in ignorance by a doating grandmother? (*Aloud.*) You said the *late* Mrs. Nosey. Do you mean to tell me that I am a grand-orphan?

BLOWER. I don't know what you are, sir, but I mourn for my grandmother. (*Weeps.*)

CHEEKS. My poor grandmother! (*Weeps.*)

BLOWER (*suddenly stopping*). Sir, I consider it a great liberty in you to cry for my grandmother.

CHEEKS. Your grandmother! How do you prove that?

BLOWER. I am here as her heir and representative.

CHEEKS. Hah!

BLOWER. "Kiss me, Cheeks," says she. "I have left you everything!"

SINGS

My Grandmother, 'twas here she slept—
Called *me* to her bed-side,
I leave you all—said she, and wept—
Good-bye—and so she died.

Both sings together.

BLOWER. Poor grandmamma!
Why did you die!
Oh! it is true
And very melancholy.
Oly—oly!

CHEEKS. Poor grandmamma
Why did you die,
Very melancholy—oly—oly—Oh!
My grandmamma!
Oh! what a lie!
If it were true
It would be melancholy—oly—oly!
My grandmamma
If not a lie!
It is melancholy—oly—oly—Oh!

CHEEKS (*aside*). He knows nothing about the Will; I'll question him. (*aloud*). "Would you be surprised" to hear that the late Mrs. Nosey left no Will?

BLOWER. No.

DUET.

AIR.—"I never forget an insult."

CH. "Would you be surprised" to hear that she had left a will?

BL. I shouldn't: with astonishment the news would not me fill.

CH. "Would you be surprised" to hear that a will she hadn't made?

BL. I shouldn't be surprised, young man, at anything you said.

CH. And "would you be surprised" for to find that will about?

BL. I shouldn't be surprised at whatever I might find out.

CH. Oh! "would you be surprised" to find that I'm the Rightful Heir?

BL. I shouldn't be surprised if you were not or if you were.

CH. No?

BL. No.

CH. No?

BL. No.

BOTH. We never would be surprised at what we might be told,
or see?

We never would be surprised if he were I, or I were he.

We never would be surprised at any news that one might
bring.

We never would be, we never would be, surprised at
anything.

[*Dance to symphony.*

CHEEKS. (*energetically.* Then sir—

BLOWER. I have no time to discuss the matter with
you. Right about face—March! I have a great work
on hand.

[*Take the trousers*

CHEEKS. Let go of my trousers!

BLOWER. Who's touching your trousers?

CHEEKS. You are. Give 'em up. (*Seizes one leg.*)

Music—Struggle.

BLOWER. Not with life!

[*They struggle and tear trousers in half.*

CHEEKS. (*aside, feeling waistband.*) I have it; there's
something here; it's the Will.

BLOW. (*aside, feeling waistband.*) Sewn up here—bank
notes, no doubt.

CHEEKS. Before we proceed any further—are you
Cheeks?

BLOWER. I am.

CHEEKS. On your word, as a marine.

BLOWER. I am.

CHEEKS. Then "would you be surprised" to hear that
I am Blowed.—Sergeant Blow!

BLOWER. No.

CHEEKS. Very well then. Now listen. I hold here
the last Will and Testament of the late Mrs. Nosey.

BLOWER. My grandmother.

CHEEKS. You are welcome to her, sir. (*Music*). Listen! In consequence of having heard of the lamentable demise of my grandson, Cheeks (*music changes*) at the battle of Dorking—I hereby bequeath the whole of my property to his brave comrade in arms, Sergeant Blower (*chord—music*). So Cheeks, get out.

BLOWER. Get out, sir! its for you to vacate the premises, for I have found a codicil (*music*). In consequence of having heard of the lamented demise of my valiant friend, Sergeant Blower, at the great naval battle of Dorking (*music changes*), I hereby revoke the above Will, and leave everything to my beloved grandson, Samuel Cheeks—So Blower, get out.

CHEEKS. It's a forgery.

BLOWER. So is yours.

CHEEKS. Show it.

BLOWER. Show yours.

CHEEKS. Shan't.

BLOWER. Shan't.

CHEEKS. Sir; there's only one way to settle this matter—it's a way we have in the army.

BLOWER. It's a way we have in the navy.

CHEEKS. This is levity. Have you a pistol about you?

BLOWER. No, sir; have you?

CHEEKS. No.

BLOWER. Then we must at once purchase a pair. You havn't got such a thing as five-and-sixpence about you?

CHEEKS. No; that's exactly what I was going to ask you.

BLOWER. I'm not going to pay for your pistol!

CHEEKS. Then you must have recourse to fire-arms. Here's mine (*seizes musket*.)

BLOWER. Hah! So will I! (*rolls in the cannon, and takes up a large cannon ball*). I'll frighten him (*aside*.)

CHEEKS. (*aside*) I'll make him tremble!

DUET.

AIR.—

BL. Wretched ruffian, as you know
The man whom you have injured so,
If not, then I will tell you—Oh—

I am a warrior bold !

CH. Trembling traitor ! don't you know
That I, whom you've insulted so,
Am one who conquers every foe,

I am a warrior bold !

BOTH. Wretched ruffian, &c.
Trembling traitor, &c.

CH. If you are Cheeks, as you pretend to be,
Why then you must have been engaged at sea.

BL. And if you're Blower, as you pretend to be,
Then you must have fought a duel in the ar-mee.

BOTH. If he, &c.

BL. 'Twas in Trafalgar's bay—
(*aside*) A first rate thing to say —
(*aloud*) I fought both night and day ;
Mid heroes you'd have found me.

CH. On Sallymanker's height—
(*aside*) I hope the name is right—
(*aloud*) I braved the fiercest fight,
My martial cloak around me !

BL. 'Twas in Trafalgar's noble bay—

CH. On Sallymanker's height I say—

BL. I fought—slash—dash—

CH. I fought—crash—smash—

BL. We boarded the barge

CH. To the sound of the charge.

BL. The marines were all there—

CH. We marched in a square.

BL. I fought and I slew,

CH. And so did I too.

BOTH. We fought and we slew,
And we did all we knew:
And now do you think I'm afraid of you—
So yield to me. Pooh !
What yield to *you* !
Never—no never ! whatever I do.
Wretched ruffian ! &c.
Trembling traitor, &c. *refrain to finish.*

CHEEKS (*aside—with gun*). I wonder how you load this.

BLOWER (*aside—with cannon*). I wonder how you load this.

CHEEKS (*aside*). I've got it. (*Aloud.*) In order to avoid any suspicion of unfairness in the coming battle, I

should prefer you loading my weapon whilst I will load yours.

BLOWER. Just exactly what I was going to propose to you. *[They exchange weapons and cross.]*

CHEEKS (*aside—with cannon ball*). I shan't put this in. Where's my hat?

BLOWER (*aside—with bullet*). Catch me loading this gun. (*Puts the bullet in his pocket, and rams the rod down violently*).

CHEEKS. Are you ready?

BLOWER. Quite. Are you?

CHEEKS. Quite.

BLOWER. Then when I say three—

CHEEKS. Fiddle-de-dee!

Shoot at me!

When do you *mean* to cry out three?

BLOWER. What's it matter when or how.

Steady—steady—

I am ready,

And I mean to cry three now!

List to me!

List to me!

CHEEKS. Fiddle-de-dee!

BLOWER. Now then, *Three*!

BOTH. Steady! steady!

Are you ready?

Quite.

Then keep your eye on me!

Vengeance dire!

I

He

| will fire

When I say—What? One! two!! THREE!!!

[The little cannon goes off with a "fizz." CHEEKS produces cannon ball, which he holds in his hand, standing in attitude.]

CHEEKS. Observe, there is no deception!

BLOWER (*crossing quickly and taking his musket*). There is not. You have behaved like a soldier and a gentleman.

CHEEKS. Oh, yes! that's all very fine; but I must have my shot.

[They have both their hands on musket.]

BLOWER. You shall!

CHEEKS. When I say "three," do you understand, whenever I say "three" I fire. Who's to have Cheeks's grandmother's property.

BLOWER. Why, Cheeks, of course. I am Cheeks!

CHEEKS. Prove it.

BLOWER. This shako, worn by me on the memorable day of Dorking. I had it made after my own pattern—*Shako a son gout—(it doesn't fit)*. His coat! I needn't call attention to the waistcoat, it speaks for itself.

CHEEKS. Then it tells a crack.

BLOWER. Having proved satisfactorily that I am Cheeks—

CHEEKS. Three! (*raising musket.*)

BLOWER. Don't; it might go off. Are you satisfied?

CHEEKS. Yes; when I've had my shot (*as if suddenly struck with an idea*). Stop! I've got something better than a shot. If you're Cheeks, I'm Blower. Blower, the detective, and must take you, Cheeks, into custody as a deserter, a forger, a swindler, and for a variety of other crimes; I shall hand you over to the police.

BLOWER. As Cheeks, I admit my guilt. But if you're Blower, a warrant is out against you as a deserter, a forger, a swindler, and etcetera!

CHEEKS. Etcetera! Good Heavens!!!

BLOWER. So I shall save myself and turn Queen's evidence.

CHEEKS. So shall I.

BOTH. Come along! (*running off arm-in-arm—they stop suddenly at door.*)

CHEEKS. Stop!

BLOWER. I won't.

CHEEKS. (*pointing musket*). Three!

BLOWER. Be quiet!

CHEEKS. Then come here, and I won't fire.

BLOWER. On your word?

CHEEKS. Of course. I've an idea. Instead of transporting each other, let's stop here and make a fortune. Are you open to a big thing?

BLOWER. Well—

CHEEKS. Thousands!

BLOWER. Hem! money!

CHEEKS. Of course (*looking round, then mysteriously. tremolo music*). I say—ahem!—I didn't see you at the battle of Dorking.

BLOWER. If you come to that, I didn't see you.

CHEEK. I wasn't there.

BLOWER. You don't say so. No more was I.

CHEEKS. No.

BLOWER. No.

CHEEKS. Ahem! Would you be surprised to hear that—

BLOWER. There never *was* a battle of Dorking?

BOTH. (*most mysteriously*). Hush . . .

CHEEKS. Then are you prepared to write an account of it?

BLOWER. I am; I've done it (*produces manuscript.*)

CHEEKS. So have I (*produces manuscript.*)

BLOWER. Then we'll write it to-gether.

CHEEKS. We will. But should the fraud be discovered—

BLOWER. Then we'll say—

CHEEKS. We will—

BLOWER. That—it was written—

CHEEKS. Precisely—by—

BOTH. My grandmother.

FINALE.

BL. Oh, would you be surprised to hear, as fact beyond all doubt,
That Blower and Cheeks are Trojans, Greeks, the greatest
heroes out.

CH. And would you be surprised to hear, that here their quarrel
ends,
And Blower and Cheeks, for several weeks, will be the best
of friends.

BL. And would you be surprised, when you're informed to-night,
That as to the Battle of Dorking, there never *was* such a
fight.

BOTH. No—no—no—no!

CH. Old England never will be surprised should you the foe
appear
As long as Cheeks—

BL.

And Blower too!

BOTH.

As long as *we* are here.

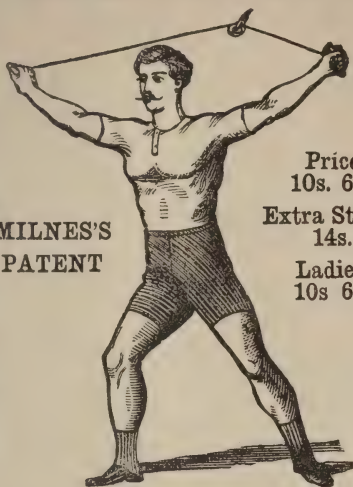
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